

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 5721, THE
STRENGTHENING THE SAFETY
NET ACT OF 2008

HON. JOHN SULLIVAN

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam Speaker, today, I am pleased to introduce H.R. 5721, the Strengthening the Safety Net Act of 2008. This important legislation will increase Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) payments to Oklahoma and 19 other low DSH States and bring Oklahoma's hospitals on equal footing with other States who receive their fair share of DSH funds.

With Oklahoma having the fourth highest rate of uninsured in the Nation, it is critical that Oklahoma hospitals receive a fair distribution of DSH funds we need to care for our indigent population. This legislation will increase the rate that unused DSH funds are reimbursed to these low DSH States from the current rate of 16 percent to 19.5 percent for the next 5 years. The Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 statutorily defined low DSH States and provided these States with 16 percent funding increases each year for the last 5 fiscal years. In total, there are 20 States that have lower DSH allotments, including: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The 16 percent rate expires at the end of this fiscal year, so it is critical that we increase this percentage so that our hospitals do not feel the financial strain of providing health care services to the indigent.

Under the 19.5 percent increases, Oklahoma will receive an additional \$49 million in Federal funds which, when matched by the State, could amount to \$75 million over the 5-year period to allocate to Oklahoma hospitals to help offset the costs of uncompensated care. Oklahoma hospitals provided \$325 million in uncompensated care costs in 2006. H.R. 5721 will help decrease uncompensated care costs for Oklahoma hospitals and ensure fairness among all 50 States by equitably distributing unused DSH Funds.

Since this bill is being solely funded through unused Federal DSH allotments, the funding source of the bill merely utilizes funds that are currently being returned to the Federal Government by other States that do not use all of their DSH funds. These unused funds currently are not being used toward any other health care related programs.

Another important issue which needs to be addressed is access to quality, affordable health care, especially within our Nation's indigent population. Indigent patients in Oklahoma and our Nation face a significant number of unmet health care needs. These patients have difficulty accessing primary, diagnostic and specialty care and rely on hospital emergency rooms as their primary entry into the health care system. The price of treating the indigent at hospital emergency rooms is astounding compared to care found in a primary care setting. H.R. 5721 will help bring down these costs and save taxpayer dollars in the process.

My legislation will create an innovative new grant program through the Department of

Health and Human Services to help our Nation's health care providers fund health access networks, which will get low income and uninsured patients who need basic medical care out of emergency rooms and into primary care facilities. These networks would be required to provide high quality primary, outpatient, inpatient and specialty care to uninsured and other medically vulnerable populations in an effort to reduce the costs of treating these individuals for hospitals and taxpayers alike.

According to a 2005 study by the Lewin Group on Strategic Planning for Safety-Net Services, Tulsa, like many communities, faces many challenges in its delivery, financing and organization that limit its ability to successfully meet the needs of safety-net populations. To give an example, the price of treating the indigent at our hospital emergency rooms is astounding compared to the cost of treating someone in a primary care setting. To give you an example: the Oklahoma Health Care Authority recently found that the cost of a claim for asthma treatment in a primary care setting was \$34.12 per claim, while the average cost for the same asthma treatment in an emergency room setting was \$61.20 per claim. While some of these claims may have been emergencies, it is clear that treatment in an outpatient setting is significantly less, almost two times less, than treatment in an emergency room. Without these networks in place, the majority of Oklahoma's uninsured will continue to go without a primary healthcare provider.

Lastly, my bill also changes the grandfather clause for the mandatory requirement related to hospitals providing nonemergency obstetric services which are located in low DSH States. The new grandfather clause will be the date this law becomes enacted. The purpose of this change is to remove a constraint imposed on low DSH States whose rural hospitals stopped providing nonemergency obstetrics during the 1990s and early 2000s due to rising liability insurance costs. The change is intended to encourage low DSH States to change their approach to funding more hospitals through the DSH program. Should my legislation become law, 16 additional Oklahoma hospitals will be able to qualify for DSH funds.

I am pleased to have the support of the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, the Oklahoma Health Association and advocates for Tulsa healthplexes for the Strengthening the Safety Net Act of 2008. As a member of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, I am looking forward to working with my colleagues on the committee to see this legislation become law.

RECOGNIZING CAPTAIN JEREMY D.
ANZEVINO

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Captain Jeremy D. Anzevino as a recipient of a Bronze Star Medal for heroic achievement during combat operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Bronze Star is the fourth highest award that the Department of Defense gives for bravery, heroism, and meritorious service.

Captain Anzevino earned the Bronze Star while he was commander of Co. L, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division of the II Marine Expeditionary Force in Iraq. He was team chief and staff maneuver advisor for the Military Transition Team, 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division, from January to July 2007.

His award citation states, "Anzevino provided advice and assistance to Iraqi leaders of 1st Battalion during counterinsurgency operations, which led to the elimination of numerous insurgents."

Captain Anzevino's bravery goes above and beyond what we are asked of as citizens of this country. His heroism illustrates the compassion of Iowans; willing to risk their own lives for their country. For this I offer him my utmost respect, congratulations, and thanks.

I commend Captain Jeremy Anzevino's courageousness and service to our great nation. I am honored to represent Captain Anzevino in the United States Congress and I wish him the best in his future service to our country.

A PROCLAMATION HONORING
JAMES VAN VOORHIS FOR WIN-
NING THE BOYS' DIVISION II
STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPION-
SHIP

HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Mr. SPACE. Madam Speaker:

Whereas, James Van Voorhis showed hard work and dedication to the sport of basketball; and

Whereas, James Van Voorhis was a supportive team player; and

Whereas, James Van Voorhis always displayed sportsmanship on and off of the court; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that along with his friends, family, and the residents of the 18th Congressional District, I congratulate James Van Voorhis on winning the Boys' Division II State Basketball Championship. We recognize the tremendous hard work and sportsmanship he has demonstrated during the 2007-2008 basketball season.

IN MEMORY OF PETTY OFFICER
MICHAEL ANTHONY MONSOOR

HON. DUNCAN HUNTER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Mr. HUNTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to the life and memory of former Petty Officer Second Class Michael Anthony Monsoor, who has been awarded this Nation's highest military honor, the Medal of Honor. A California native, Michael courageously gave his life in the service of his country, upholding and reflecting the highest traditions of the United States Navy.

Born April 5, 1981, in Long Beach California, Michael attended Garden Grove High School where he played football. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy on March 21, 2001 and attended Basic Training at Recruit Training